

A major source for much of the above information was **Scott D. Trostel's excellent work: Detroit, Toledo & Ironton Railroad**, published by Cam-Tech Publishing, P.O. Box 341,. Fletcher, Ohio 45326-0341 and is part of the Ohio Railroad Heritage Series Books, #3.

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## IRONTON

**IRONTON**, a city and the county-seat of Lawrence county, I Ohio, U.S.A., on the Ohio river, about 142 111. E.S.E. of Cincinnati. Pop. (1890) 10,939; (1900) 11,868, of whom 924 were negroes and 714 foreign-born; (1910 census) 13,147. It is served by the Chesapeake and Ohio, the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton, the Norfolk and Western, and the Detroit, Toledo and Ironton railways, and by river steamboats. The city is built on a plain at the base of hills rising from the river bottom and abounding in iron ore and bituminous coal; fire and pottery clay also occur in the vicinity. Besides mining, Ironton has important lumber interests, considerable river traffic, and. numerous manufactures, among which are iron, wire, nails, machinery, stoves, fire-brick, pressed brick, terracotta, cement, carriages and wagons, and furniture. The total value of its factory product in 1905 was \$4,755,304; in 1900, \$5,410,528. ~The municipality owns and operates its water-works. Ironton was first settled in 1848, and in 1851 was incorporated.

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## After 136 straight years, Ironton's Memorial Day parade is oldest

### The Associated Press

**IRONTON, Ohio** - The Ironton-Lawrence County Memorial Day parade will roll through town Monday for the 136th consecutive year.

The parade is the oldest continuing Memorial Day observance in the country, parade organizers said. An Ohio Historical Society marker will be erected today.

"We have never missed a year," said Jim Adkins, grand marshal in 1993 and spokesman for the parade planning committee.

Ironton held its first parade in 1868, the same year the Grand Army of the Republic established May 30 as a day of remembering fallen comrades.

The early parades in Ironton were small, and featured 40 yokes of oxen, Adkins said.

In the 1950s, all schoolchildren were expected to march, holding flowers in one hand and waving a handkerchief or flag. After the parade, they were given report cards.

This year's parade - with a theme of "One Nation Under God" - is expected to have more than 3,000 marchers - including high school bands, 4-H clubs, beauty queens and Smokey Bear, the forest fire prevention mascot.

Organizers expected 50,000 people to watch the parade, the mayor's office said. Ironton has a population of about 11,500.

"We honor the veterans. We have no political advertisements, and no commercial advertisements are allowed in the parade," Adkins said

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# THE IRONTON TRIBUNE

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## News

### Festival attracts big crowd

By Michael Caldwell/The Ironton Tribune

Tuesday, June 29, 2004 12:01 PM CDT

Thousands of people from across the Tri-State and beyond visited downtown Ironton over the weekend, prompting organizers to call this year's Ironmaster Days festival one of the most successful ever.

In its the seventh year, the annual event sponsored by the Ironton Business Association, used musical entertainment, an antique tractor and engine show, a car show, vendors, children's entertainment and more to draw many people to downtown.

"We had some of the biggest crowds we have ever had since I have been involved," said Richard Patrick, IBA vice president, who is in his second year of involvement. "I have heard estimates for Saturday evening alone that range from 1,500 to 3,000 people."

Mayor John Elam said the event is a tremendous benefit for the city and the entire community.

"There were more tractors than I have ever seen," Elam said. "It was a good family event, the success of which can be contributed to (IBA President) Pat Murphy, the IBA and a group of individuals who worked hard to make it such a safe and successful event."

As an organizer for the tractor and engine show, Don Mootz saw firsthand how the event has grown, now drawing more than 120 exhibitors.

"It was very successful. It was the biggest we have ever had as far as visitors," Mootz said. "We had more exhibitors than we had in the past, too. We had perfect weather and just really enjoyed it."

Downtown business owner Joe Unger was named as the Ironmaster honoree.

Many vendors said business increased significantly from last year and that they are looking forward to returning, Patrick said.

Elam and Patrick agreed that everyone was excited to keep the momentum going and build on the success.

"I think people say what a good festival it has become," Elam said. "I talked to a lot of people who are already looking forward to helping next year. I know the IBA is already making plans for an even bigger and more successful event next year."

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## WHEN THE TANKS WERE TOPS

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**1926 State Champs Ironton Tanks**

Back Row, L-R Able, Barron, Pope, Brooks, Nemeck, Smith and Gates

Middle, Lynch, V. Pope, Heald, Poole, Winters, Dandolet

Front: Andrews, Frecka, Davies, Peters and Stock

### Home

What did the Tanks mean to Ironton? Consider the statement of Harold Rolph: "The Tanks were something that pulled the community together, They were something everyone talked about." The Sunday games were packed. Not only did this give the town pride in itself, but the games were social events."

Glenn Presnell added: "Anywhere you went and talked with people who knew football, they knew about the Ironton Tanks. We were nationally famous, and that fame reflected well on Ironton.

In the 12 year of their existence, the Ironton Tanks splashed a blaze of glory across the semi-professional gridirons of the midwestern America. They were irons of midwestern America. They were the scourge of other semi-pro teams and had the audacity-and talent- to challenge and defeat NFL teams.

It is ironic that just as the Tanks reached their time of greatest glory that they were forced to disband. Pushed by the Depression, professional football became a 'big city-money game. "No longer would small towns, with a lot of pride and heart, be able to challenge the big cities on the football team. A golden era for football and Ironton died together.

Sometime this fall, preferably on a crisp Sunday afternoon, visit Tank Memorial Stadium, renamed to honor the town's team. Listen closely and you can harken

back to an earlier time. If you're lucky, you can hear the faint echoes of football played on that same green field over 70 years ago, and visualize a packed stadium and sidelines jammed with Tank faithful, cheering on their beloved 'Big Red.'

Start

## WHEN THE TANKS WERE TOPS



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### Home

November 30, 1930, was a classic Indian summer day in southern Ohio. Balmy, shirt-sleeve temperatures greeted the 10,000 football fans who flocked into the Old Redland Field in Cincinnati to watch the upstart small-town Ironton Tanks battle the "Monsters of the Midway," the Chicago Bears.

That it was a glorious day for the semi-professional Tanks is perhaps an understatement and victory coming just two weeks after the Tanks destroyed the New York Giants, another NFL power! Were the Tanks for real?

All too real, it seemed to other semi-pro and professional teams, as the Tanks stalked 85 victims in 12 years and tasted defeat only 19 times. The Tanks, a combination of ex-college athletes and local boys, provided a much-needed source of pride to

The National Football League, or as it was originally called, the American Professional Football Association, was founded in July 1919 in an automobile showroom in Canton, Ohio.

representatives of five teams attended and paid \$25 each for a franchise in the league. Each team developed its own schedule against other league teams or the numerous semi-pro teams which had sprung up around the country following World War I.

During the 1920's the cost of a franchise rose to \$100, and the number of teams in the NFL fluctuated between 13 and 20. The league was loosely organized with players jumping from team to team and back. Teams shifted in and out of the leagues. League championships were claimed-but regularly disputed. Meanwhile, football fans and the media generally ignored the pro game.



Irontonians-and an unending source of conversation at the local Elks Club. Remember the \$10,000 field goal? The day the moving van loaded with Columbus players pulled into Portsmouth? And yes, those Portsmouth Spartans, now they were the scourge of the earth...

November 30, 1930, was an odds-defying day for the Tanks, who a year later did not exist and who, seventy years later have not been forgotten.

Glenn Presnell, one of the stars of the Chicago game (see Tanks vs. Bears) recalls the Tanks: "People ask me how a little town like Ironton could support a team that could beat a team like the Chicago Bears. I would have to explain how football was organized at that time and how the Tanks could attract and keep the caliber of players we had. It's really a long story and is a little hard for a modern football to understand."

The really big break for pro football occurred in 1925 when Harold "Red" Grange finished his spectacular college career at the University of Illinois and joined the Chicago Bears for a barnstorming tour. Grange, the 'Gallopig Ghost," was a classic triple-threat back. Graduating from college in 1925, he was a three time All-American and that era's most highly publicized college football player. Grange was more than a franchise; he became a league in 1926. The NFL expanded to 22 teams for the season, and a new nine-team league known as the American Football League was developed around Grange and his New York Yankee team. This over-expansion was a disaster for all concerned, and by 1927, the American League folded and only 12 teams played in the NFL. From 1927 through 1930, the number of teams ranged from 10 to 12. In 1930, one of the teams to join the 'big league' was the Portsmouth Spartans..... Page 2 --->



## WHEN THE TANKS WERE TOPS

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### Home

.....one of the few teams which emerged from the semi-pro ranks into the big time, of only for a few seasons. (They were sold in 1934 for \$16,500 and became the Detroit Lions franchise)

Professional football in the 1920's was in a chaotic state. Because the crowds were often small, players were usually only paid \$25 or \$50 a game, if at all. Teams came and went. Players like Jim Thorpe and Paddy Driscoll could change teams, playing for the highest bidder, and college players often played for pro teams using assumed names and disguising themselves with adhesive tape on their faces.

Semi-professional football began in Ironton as early as 1893 with a team known as the 'Irontonians.' Little is known about the Irontonians except that their biggest rival was the Portsmouth Cycle Club, the beginning of an intense competition which was to stretch through the semi-pro league days of the 1920's into modern time.

The Ironton Tanks were founded in 1919, and many legends have developed about how the team started and picked up the nickname of the Tanks. It came as a result of the amalgam of talent of two cross-town rival sandlot teams, the "Irish Town Rags" and the "Lombards." This consolidation of returning World War I veterans and younger athletes was the nucleus of the first Tanks team. The Ranks of these originals have been thinned today, but the survivors recall practice sessions under the arc

describes the team's play. In 12 seasons, the Tanks rumbled to a record of 85 wins, 14 ties and 19 losses against strong semi-professional and NFL teams.



Presnell practices kick with "Father Lumpkin"

After a series of games in 1919 between some Ironton teams, an all-star team was picked to play a four-game schedule. All of the players were hometown boys who agreed to share any of the gate receipts. The team got a late start compared with other area teams and amassed a 1-1-1 record going into the highlight game of the season: a Thanksgiving clash with Portsmouth.

The Portsmouth team which had been playing all fall, was accompanied to Ironton by 300 confident fans. Ironton fans were confident also, because they had an ace up their sleeve: T.C. "Shorty" Davies, a former Ironton High School star and a running back at

lights at the corner near Lawrence Street and Lombard schools with a football and scant equipment.

Jim Mains, lifelong Ironton resident and childhood fan of the Tanks (and one-time coach at St. Joseph's and Ironton High School) says the team started when a group of returning veterans got together who "just wanted to play football." They likened themselves to the battlefield tanks because they rolled over their opponents without mercy, and the name stuck. Perhaps they got their name from a headline that first season, which read:

"Ironton Runs Over Portsmouth Like Tanks" However the name arrived is of little consequence, but it aptly

Ohio State and West Virginia universities, returned home to play for the Tanks in the big game. (Davies refused his share of the gate receipts so he could retain his college eligibility.)

Davies proved to be an early problem for Portsmouth when three minutes into the game he carried the ball around right end and down the sideline for a spectacular 50-yard touchdown run. Portsmouth could never seem to get going against the strong Rank defense, and the game ended. Ironton 12, Portsmouth 0. Page 3 -->

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Their first season, the Tanks had a final 2-1-1 record, with their only loss at the hands of the undefeated Ashland Play House. both the 1920 and 1921 seasons were successful for the Tanks as they compiled records of 5-1-1 and 7-2. During that period, they lost one game to Morris Harvey College but beat Marshall College in a shutout. Davies continue to commute to Ironton from Morgantown to play for the Tanks, and then team "imported" it's first outsiders. "Red" Weaver, an All-American center from Centre College, Clyde Lady form Ashland and Dana Lough and Reynolds from Jackson, Ohio. The majority of the Tanks, however, were local boys with little or no college football experience.



"Concrete Poole" One of the original Tanks,

Concrete played with the Tanks for six years

Harry "Dutch" Crawford, a former Tank player, attributed the team's easy success to conditioning. "We were in better condition than the rest of the teams," he said recently. "The team would run - never drive - from the Elks Club, where we changed, to the

threatening, that Portsmouth disbanded it's semi-pro team for the season - at least, that's what Ironton newspaper scribes said.

Support for the Tanks was building. More than 2,500 fans turned out for the home opener in 1922 against Columbus Olympians, even though Beechwood Park had seating for only 300 people. The Tanks rolled over seven straight opponents, and in one game they crushed Williamson, W. Va. 76-0 in preparation for the Thanksgiving Day finale with the Huntington Boosters. Seating for 3,000 fans was erected, and still many people were forced to stand along the field. A field goal by Andy Andrews (Purdue) in the final two minutes saved the game for the Tanks as they came from behind and defeated the 'big city' team 12-10.

The team merited the appreciation of the fans, as the 1923 edition won nine of 10 games against an increasingly more difficult schedule. The loss was to the Huntington Boosters, but the Tanks avenged the defeat by winning the other two games of the three-game series.

Portsmouth again fielded a semi-pro team, and as usual, the Ironton-Portsmouth game aroused a lot of interest. Stimulating much of the excitement was heavy betting on the game by the team's supporters. It was becoming a common practice by the time for a number of "local sports" in Ironton to get some money together and then send a representative to

park where we practiced. This got us in shape and we could outrun the other teams and last longer."

In the four seasons from 1922 through 1925 the Tanks amassed an amazing 37-2-2 record, highlighted by the undefeated (8-0) 1922 team, the year in which Davies was hired by the Ironton school board to coach the high school team.

Davies was to be the first of many such school teacher-football players. He was apparently so awesome, and his full return to the team so

Portsmouth to see if they could get the bet covered. They usually could.

The game itself proved secondary to the betting as the Tanks unofficially crushed the Spartans at Portsmouth 40-0. Unofficially? Two minutes before the end of the game, at the strong urging of Portsmouth fans, the head official stepped forward and called the game, declaring it a mismatch. His final pronouncement: "All bets off."

From that point on, all Tanks - Spartans games were for blood.

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Ironton supporters were amazed that they could find takers for bets for the rematch later in the season. Right up to game time, Portsmouth fans were covering bets, and the Ironton bettors kept laying the money, smiling and shaking their hands as they watched the raggedy Spartans warm up.

But wait! The Ironton backers soon were stunned as they watched a moving van wheel up to the Portsmouth bench. It wasn't furniture being unloaded. Out jumped members of the Columbus West Side Club, all dressed in Spartan uniforms, a team that Tanks had defeated only 7-6 in an earlier game that season.

Harry Crawford said, "Portsmouth wanted to beat Ironton so bad that they went out and hired a team from Columbus but we won anyway"

The final score: Tanks 21, Portsmouth (really Columbus) 6.

In the 10 games played in 1923, the Tanks held their opponents to a total of 18 points and they continued to roll. In 1924 and '25 the Tanks established a record of 20-1-3, the only loss coming on the field to the NFL Canton Bulldogs. The Bulldogs then featured the legendary Jim Thorpe, who led the bulldogs to a 12-0 win.

The success of the Tanks in the first half of the 1920's demanded changes in the team's organization. The community took an active interest in the team and pushed for a new stadium and upgraded schedule. A group called the Beechwood Stadium Corp.. was formed and held it's first meeting on April 16, 1926, at the Elks Clubs. Only 10 days later, \$35,000 had been raised for the stadium's construction. Six months later,

the stadium was completed on land owned by the Ironton school board.

The stadium, Tank Memorial Stadium, is still today for high school athletic events, and ren one of the few roofed school stadiums in the



Harry Pope, Tackle. Pope played for the Un of St. Louis and then the Wellston team b joining the Tanks

The schedule, drawn up by Nick McMahon & Jimmy Lambert, was upgraded with the addi games with teams from Cleveland, Akron, Middletown, Kokomo and the Kansas City C Yet it proved no trouble for the Tanks as they recorded a 10-1-1 season.

The inaugural game in the new stadium pitte Tanks against the semi-pro Cleveland Indian than 4,000 fans crowded into Beechwood to the Tanks maul the Indians, 47-0.

The season's high point was the Thanksgiving game with the NFL Kansas City Cowboys, w finished fourth in the 22 team league. The Cc apparently created quite a spectacle Jim Mai recalls:

"They all wore 10-gallan hats and cowboy bc They were really a colorful sight on the stree Ironton"

The game ended in a tie

In 1927 the Tanks only loss came in the seco

The Stadium Corporation controlled the Tanks, but in essence the citizens of Ironton owned the team. When completed, the roofed stadium seated 3,112 fans and included 40 box seats.

with Portsmouth. Jim Thorpe, who was then 40 years old, was playing for the Spartans and the team avenge it's earlier 18-0 loss to the T defeating them, 7-0. Page 5 --->

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After that season, the Beechwood Stadium Corp., decided to further strengthen the team. Rather than depend so heavily on local talent, the corporation decided to recruit more former college players to move to Ironton and play fulltime for the Tanks. Letters were written to All-American and All-Conference selections listed in Walter Camp's Annual Football Guide. If a player showed interest, he was invited for a visit.

One of the players contacted was Glenn Presnell, who had been named to a number of 1927 All-American teams after an extremely successful college career as a single wing tailback at the University of Nebraska. After corresponding with the Tank's, Presnell was invited to visit the town by Nick McMahan, the business manager. Presnell remembers the visit:



Glen Presnell and his 1927 All American Trophy

"You have to understand, there was no college draft then and you could play for whoever made the best offer. I had an offer from the New York Giants for about \$150 or \$175 per game. But that was just for three months. I also had an offer to coach and teach at one of the best high schools in Nebraska for \$1600 for year, which was pretty good. The Tanks

plains around Nebraska. But the people were very friendly and welcomed me with open arms.

"I knew almost at once that this was where I wanted to play football and teach."

The combination of local, college and weekend players was, again, successful. The Tanks opened the 1928 season with two crushing wins (Columbus Bobbs Chevrolet, 52-0 and the Cleveland Panthers 47-0) in which Presnell scored five touchdowns and "Pony" Smith, a 155 pound halfback from Mercer College, scored four. The season ended with a 8-1-2 record. One of ties was a game with arch-rival Portsmouth, and the loss was 7-6 at the hands of Ashland-Armco, the only time the Tanks were scored on during the entire season.

Continuing their recruiting efforts for the 1929 season, the Tanks offered contracts ranging from \$50 to \$100 a game as well as teaching positions in various Lawrence County schools. Harold Rolph, a life-long Ironton resident who played his college football as Xavier University and jointed the Tanks in 1928, explained the relationship among the Tank players, the schools and the community.

"It was common knowledge that if you played for the Tanks you



offered almost as much per game as the Giants, plus they offered me a job teaching at Ironton High School at \$1600 for nine months. That really appealed to me because I had my degree in physical education and science and knew I wanted to be a teacher in the future.

"In Ironton everything seemed kind of crowded together by the hills, particularly after being in the

could get a job teaching in Lawrence County. The school system had about 12 or 13 high schools and a Tank coached or taught at almost everyone. It really worked out well, because all of the players who were given teaching jobs had degrees from good schools. More than that, they were real gentlemen and fit right into community life.

"None of them were tramp athletes. Well, maybe one or two, but I think five or six of them married Ironton girls and lived here year round. They really added to the community. If you were a Tank, you were invited to the finest homes in Ironton for dinners and parties. Ironton was a football town and the townspeople liked to associate with the players."

Aside from the Elks Club, where [Page 6 --->](#)

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Part 6

### Home

conversations started and ended with the Tanks, another center for football boosterism was Sande's drugstore on South Second Street, near the Hotel Marting, operated by "Doc" Sande and Lee O'Leary. There was an upstairs room where exercise equipment had been installed for Tank team members to work out. (It was to this same drugstore in Ironton that Presnell returned for a brief post World War II fling at business life before moving on to Eastern Kentucky State University.



T. Charlton "Shortie" Davies, Quarterback. Davies played for Ohio State University and West Virginia. Started with the Tanks in 1920 and was an Ironton High School star also

The 1929 season was the only losing season for the Tanks, although they opened with three straight wins, including a 78-0 defeat of the Toledo Boosters. The fourth game of the season was against the Portsmouth Spartans, who were also undefeated.

A crowd of 6,000 appeared on game day at Portsmouth Stadium, one of the largest crowds ever to attend a football

The Spartans got some measure of revenge when the Tanks star halfback, Glenn Presnell, was carried off the field injured in the third quarter after a collision with "Father" Lumpkin, the Spartan quarterback. Neither team could score in the first half, but late in the third quarter the Tanks began to drive deep into Spartan territory. The drive stalled on the 33-yard line. On fourth down, Tank guard Jim Welch (Colgate) was sent into the game to attempt a field goal. The kick barely cleared the crossbar, but it was good enough to give Ironton a 3-0 lead.

The defensive battle continued until late in the third quarter when the Tanks were forced to punt from their own 20-yard line. Into the game to receive the punt for the Spartans went substitute halfback Keith Molesworth (he played for the Tanks the next season), Molesworth caught the ball at midfield, ran to his left, cut back to the middle behind a wall of blockers and raced untouched into the end zone. The Portsmouth fans went crazy, and no doubt began to count their winnings, but there was a red flag at the line of scrimmage. Portsmouth offside. No touchdown. First and ten, Ironton.

At this point, the home crowd got rather ugly. \$10,000 down the drain because a stupid mistake like offside. A squad of special police kept the crowd at bay. At the final gun, a mob of Portsmouth fans rushed the officials and Ray Eichenlaub, the umpire, was struck in the jaw. Harry Sheets, the

game in the area. Rumors circulated that \$10,000 had been bet. The sensational play of both teams in the early season and heated rivalry stimulated even non-gamblers to put down a little something on their favorite.

The game was decidedly hard hitting, but a Portsmouth newspaper account hinted at more than rough play...."It seems impossible that officials on the field could not see the strong arm stuff that Ironton was pulling, Portsmouth player after player left the field limping with twisted limbs...Twice when Portsmouth players retaliated at tacklers for rough stuff, the officials saw it quick enough to penalize Portsmouth."

Portsmouth police chief, gave the officials a 'military escort" from the field.

The following Monday's edition of the Ironton Tribune congratulated the Tanks on their tough, hard-nosed play, but the highest praise went to Jim Welch, the kicker of what the Tribune called the \$10,000 field goal.

After the game, the Tanks were rolling with four straight wins, but Presnell and three other players had been injured and were not available to play as the Tanks then lost four of the next five games (twice to Ashland-Armco, which was unheard of) and later 39 - 0 crushing defeat by Portsmouth. Even the recruitment of five college players to supplement the Page 7 --->

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the Tank team (They put tape on their faces as a disguise and used fictitious names) couldn't help the Tanks, whose final record in 1929 was 5-6. It was apparent that some changes had to be made.

In December 1929, the stockholders of the Beechwood Stadium Corp., held their annual meeting at which the treasurer's report disclosed that the Tanks were \$1800 in the red, but if "no stock payments were made, everything would be fine." A stockholder suggested selling the stadium to the school board for \$10,000, but that idea was squashed when it was pointed out that the stadium was on school property. (It was later turned over to the board after the Tanks disbanded.)

The stockholders agreed that the use of "weekend" players should be discouraged and that more fulltime players should be recruited. The Tribune account of the meeting noted there was no question of disbanding the Tanks, even with the recent stock market crash and the impending depression.

Late in the summer of 1930, the Tanks hired Earle "Greasy" Neale as head coach, thus allowing Presnell to concentrate on playing. Neale, a colorful figure, had played pro baseball and was a member of the 1919 Cincinnati Reds who beat the Chicago White Sox in what was to become known as the "Black Sox" World Series. He coached the 1922 Washington and Jefferson College

Following the arrival of Neale, the Tanks geared up for their opening game with Portsmouth, which also had a beefed up team and had purchased a franchise in the NFL.



Kermit Frecka, Halfback. West Virginia Wesleyan star in 1924. Graduated from Ironton High in 1922 'great speed around the ends' considered by some to be the 'second Red Grange'

Six thousand fans overflowed Beechwood Stadium for the game in which the Spartans were favored to win by at least three touchdowns. But at the end of three quarters, it was a scoreless tie.

The Tanks scored a TD early in the fourth quarter for a 6-0 lead and attempted to hold on, but the Spartans roared back to tie the game, 6-6. The extra point attempt was wide to the right, but a penalty flag was down. Ironton offside. The NFL rules at that time said that if the defensive team was penalized on an extra point attempt, the point was given offensive team. So the scoreboard read (although many Ironton fans couldn't

football team that played in the Rose Bowl. While highly successful at West Virginia Wesleyan, he and a number of his players used assumed names to play for the professional Canton Bulldogs.

Presnell, happy to be relieved of his coaching duties because he had taken a job teaching and coaching at Russell High School, said of Neale: "He had one of the finest football minds I have ever seen. We did things in 1930 with the Tanks, things like looping and angle charges, that are still being done today and considered new ideas."

To go with the holdovers from the 1929 team, Neale picked up ends Dick Powell and Tex Mitchell from Davis and Elkins College, and Presnell recruited a number of players he knew from Iowa and Nebraska. Just before the season began, Molesworth (Monmouth College) joined the team after being cut by the Spartans.

believe it) Spartans 7, Tanks 6.

Following an opening game loss, the Tanks rebounded with two wins. The next game was a Portsmouth rematch at Spartans Stadium.

Both teams were somewhat injury riddled, and the Portsmouth coach started his second team. (He explained later he had hoped to save his starters for the more important NFL games to come.) Tanks' coach "Greasy" Neale took more direct action. In the locker room, he put on Tex Mitchell's uniform, and at the age of 44, Neale inserted himself into the lineup.

The Tanks roared to a 13-0 lead in the first half against the Spartan second string, and.... Page 8 --->

## Ironton Football Dot Com

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### Ironton Tank Stadium Dedication Day

July 21, 2002

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#### Marker Inscription

### Tanks Memorial Stadium

Opened in 1926. Tanks Memorial Stadium became the home of the Ironton Tanks semi-professional football team. The Tanks were formed in 1919 and through the years played other semi-professional teams as well as teams from the American Professional Football Association that became the National Football League in 1930. In 12 seasons The Tanks had a record of 85 wins, 19 losses and 14 ties, including wins against the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants. The Tanks disbanded in 1931 but five players moved on to the Portsmouth Spartans, which became the Detroit Lions, and other NFL teams picked up four more players. Tanks Stadium is one of the few remaining roofed high school football stadiums in the country.

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#### Reverse Side Historical Marker

Semi-Professional football began in Ironton began in 1893 with a team known as "The Irontonians." The Ironton Tanks, founded in 1919, was a combination of two Ironton cross-town football rivals known as the "Irish Town Rags" and "The Lombards." The Ironton Tanks, perhaps one of the most appropriate

nicknames of the period, one that evidently no other team in the nation adopted, is fitting because the returning World War I veterans combined with the local clubs likened themselves to the battlefield tanks that flattened the opposition. Ironton, a city heavily dependant on the iron industry, adopted the Tanks name with gusto. On April 16, 1926, a group called The Beechwood Stadium was raised to raise money to build the Tanks a permanent home. Six months later, the stadium was completed. The Tanks invented plays like looping and angle charges, that are still being used in The NFL today.

Inscription by Joe Unger.

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## Ironton

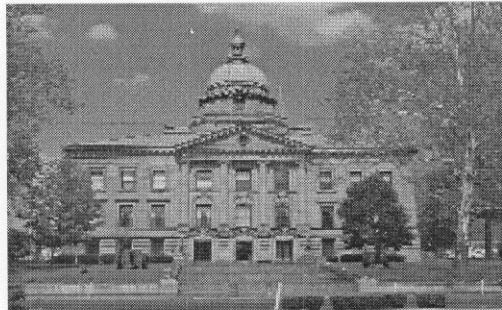
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## Historical City of Ironton, Ohio

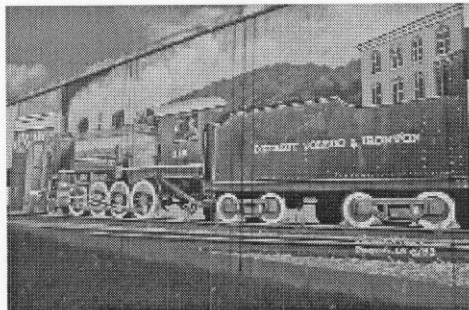
The great success of the iron industry and its allied manufacturing created men of great wealth. The affluence of those early days is reflected in many of Ironton's homes and churches, attractive reminds of a gracious Victorian life-style. For more information contact: Greater Lawrence County Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

**P O Box 488 ~ 216 Collins Avenue ~ South Point, Ohio 45680**  
or e-mail us at: [glcacvb@zoominternet.net](mailto:glcacvb@zoominternet.net)



### Lawrence County Courthouse

The city of Ironton was founded in 1849 and was built in the heart of Hanging Rock Region, once the largest center of pig iron in the world. As a terminal on the Iron Railroad and as a shipping port on the Ohio River, Ironton grew rapidly, becoming the county seat of Lawrence County, Ohio in 1851.



### Floodwall Murals

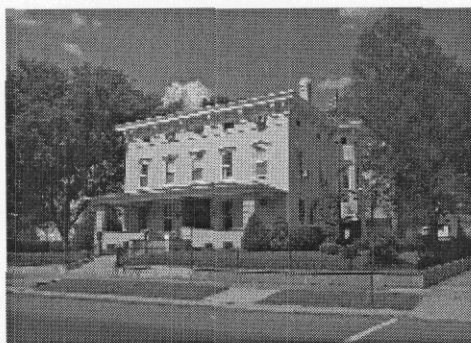
Upon your visit to the city of Ironton, drive down to the Second Street landing to view a

pictorial history lesson of Lawrence Countians. Local artists have created art murals along the floodwall facing the Ohio River.



## Lawrence County Museum

This Victorian-Italian Villa, three and one-half story brick was built by James Furgerson, but it was most noted for having been the residence of Colonel Gray, an ironmaster, whose wife Eliza Ann Humphreys was the granddaughter of the famous abolitionist John Rankin.



## John Campbell Home

John Campbell, founder of Ironton, pioneer ironmaster and railroad developer, built this Early Victorian brick in 1850's. He was an active abolitionist and aided fugitive slaves by concealing them in two semi-concealed rooms under the hip roof of this home. It has 22 rooms and houses the Community Action Organization.

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# Ohio Bicentennial



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#### Tanks Memorial Stadium

- Lawrence County

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#### Location:

Ironton High School Sports Center Outdoor Area, 1701 South Seventh Street, Ironton

#### Facts:

Semi-professional football in Ironton began in 1893 with the Irontonians. The Ironton Tanks were founded in 1919 as a combination of two rival cross-town football clubs. Players likened themselves to battlefield tanks that flattened the opposition. The team played other semi-professional football teams and teams from the American Professional Football Association, which became the National Football League in 1930. In 1921 Tanks Memorial Stadium became the team's home. The Tanks accumulated a record of 85-14-19 during its 12 year existence. The team was disbanded in 1931 and many of its players went on to play professional football.

This marker is part of the Longaberger Legacy Initiative.

Dedicated on Sunday, July 21, 2002.

★

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